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TAGS: PINT, GW

SUBJECT: FRANZ JOSEF STRAUSS AND THE CHANCELLOR

CANDIDATE ISSUE

REF: BONN 3440, MUNICH 0454, BONN 4240

SUMMARY: THE DISCLOSURE OF A "SECRET" SPEECH BY FRANZ JOSEF STRAUSS TO CSU FUNCTIONARIES LAST NOVEMBER AND THE BAVARIAN CSU LEADER'S PERFORMANCE IN THE RECENT BUNDESTAG DEBATE ON INTERNAL SECURITY HAVE PROBABLY REDUCED HIS CHANCES TO BECOMEOPPOSITION CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE IN THE 1976 NATIONAL ELECTIONS. IN THE SONT-HOFEN SPEECH, STRAUSS ADVISED AGAINST HELPING THE GOVERNMENT SOLVE MAJOR PROBLEMS FACED BY GERMANY AND SUGGESTED THAT THE SITUATION BE ALLOWED TO REACH CRISIS PROPORTIONS IN ORDER TO ASSURE UNION VICTORY NEXT YEAR. HE ALSO PROPOSED TO PLAY UPON THE FEARS OF THE GERMAN PUBLIC CONCERNING INTERNAL SECURITY. FOLLOWING THE PUBLICATION, STRAUSS ONLY HALF HEARTEDLY

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DENIED HAVING MADE SUCH STATEMENTS IN SONTHOFEN, AND

HIS PERFORMANCE DURING THE INTERNAL SECURITY DEBATE
CONFIRMED, AT LEAST IN PART, THAT HE WAS PRACTICING
WHAT HE PREACHED IN THE NOVEMBER SPEECH. NOBODY IS SURE
WHETHER STRAUSS, IN FACT, WANTS TO BE THE CANDIDATE
(E.G., HE RECENTLY DENIED SEEKING THE NOMINATION BUT
HINTED THAT HE WOULD SERVE IF CALLED UPON).
EVEN IF STRAUSS DOES NOT SEEK THE NOMINATION, THERE
WILL BE TOUGH NEGOTIATIONS ABOUT A JOINT CDU/CSU PARTY
PROGRAM FOR THE 1976 ELECTIONS. END SUMMARY

1. THE MARCH 10 ISSUE OF "SPIEGEL" CARRIED A COVER
SPEECH HE HAD MADE TO CSU FUNCTIONARIES, NOVEMBER 19,
1974.

2. IN THE SPEECH (STRAUSS ONLY HALF HEARTEDLY DENIED
"SPIEGEL'S" VERSION IN A PRESS CONFERENCE MARCH 10),
THE BAVARIAN CSU LEADER OUTLINED THE STRATEGY FOR THE
OPPOSITION. HE PROPOSED THAT THE CDU/CSU SHOULD NOT
COOPERATE WITH THE GOVERNMENT IN SOLVING MAJOR PROBLEMS,
SUCH AS INFLATION, UNEMPLOYMENT AND INTERNAL SECURITY,
BUT SHOULD LET THE SITUATION DEVELOP INTO CRISIS PRO-
PORTIONS. HE SUGGESTED THAT THE CDU/CSU CONCENTRATE
ON ATTACKING THE SOCIAL-LIBERAL COALITION RATHER THAN
PROPOSING ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS AND CALLED UPON THE
OPPOSITION TO PLAY ON THE FEARS AND INSECURITY OF THE
GERMAN PUBLIC ABOUT POLITICAL TERRORISM.

3. STRAUSS ALSO ACCUSED BARZEL AND KOHL OF BEING
WILLING TO COOPERATE WITH THE SPD. IN THE CASE OF
BARZEL, HE CLAIMED THE FORMER UNION CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE
HAD ACTUALLY DISCUSSED THE POSSIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING
A FOURTH PARTY THAT WOULD JOIN THE SPD IN A FUTURE
COALITION. NOT SURPRISINGLY, THE DISCLOSURE OF
STRAUSS' SPEECH CREATED CONSTERNATION WITHIN THE CDU
AND PROVIDED THE SPD WITH A CONVENIENT TARGET. THE
SOCIAL DEMOCRATS AND LIBERALS WASTED NO TIME IN ATTACK-
ING STRAUSS AND CLAIMING THAT THE SONTHOFEN SPEECH
WAS EVIDENCE OF HIS IRRESPONSIBILITY AND RUTHLESSNESS.

4. DURING THE BUNDESTAG DEBATE ON INTERNAL SECURITY
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MARCH 13, STRAUSS' BITTER ATTACK AGAINST WILLY BRANDT
AND THE SPD CONFIRMED, AT LEAST PARTIALLY, THAT HE
WAS ADHERING TO THE SONTHOFEN STRATEGY. ALTHOUGH
EARLIER IN THE DEBATE HELMUT KOHL HAD DEFENDED STRAUSS,
POLARIZATION OF THE ISSUES WAS NOT WHAT THE CDU
LEADERS WANTED. AN INDICATION OF THIS WAS THAT THE
FIRST OPPOSITION SPEAKER, ALFRED DREGGER, A VOCAL CRITIC
OF THE GOVERNMENT AND CLOSE TO STRAUSS ON MOST ISSUES,

WAS RESTRAINED IN ATTACKING THE GOVERNMENT. NEVERTHELESS, THE CDU/CSU WALKED OUT IN PROTEST OF SPD FRAKTION LEADER WEHNER'S REMARKS ABOUT STRAUSS DURING THE DEBATE.

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5. THE SONTHOFEN SPEECH DISCLOSURES AS WELL AS STRAUSS' PERFORMANCE IN THE BUNDESTAG DEBATE ARE LIKELY TO MAKE HIM EVEN LESS ACCEPTABLE THAN BEFORE TO A SIGNIFICANT SEGMENT WITHIN THE CDU. THESE TWO PERFORMANCES REFLECT THE DUALISM OF STRAUSS' PERSONALITY. ON THE ONE HAND, THEY WERE PARTLY BASED ON AN ANALYSIS OF THE PUBLIC MOOD IN GERMANY WHICH, HE BELIEVES, CALLS FOR CONFRONTATION AND POLARIZATION VIS-A-VIS THE GOVERNMENT AS THE BEST STRATEGY FOR WINNING THE 1976 ELECTIONS. ON THE OTHER HAND, THEY REFLECT ALSO THE LACK OF DISCIPLINE AND STRAUSS' INABILITY TO RESTRAIN HIM-

SELF. IN ANY EVENT, THEY WILL NOT BE HELPFUL IN OB-TAINING THE SUPPORT OF THE GERMAN MIDDLE-OF-THE ROAD VOTER.

6. A SOURCE IN THE CSU CLOSE TO STRAUSS HAS TOLD US THAT STRAUSS PERSONALLY FEELS UNDER CONSIDERABLE PSY-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CHOLOGICAL PRESSURE AS A RESULT OF THREATS MADE AGAINST HIM AND HIS FAMILY. THE SOURCE BELIEVES THAT GIVEN THESE PERSONAL CONSIDERATIONS STRAUSS MAY NOT WANT TO BE THE UNION'S CHANCELLORSHIP NOMINEE. IN AN INTERVIEW MARCH 13, STRAUSS DENIED THAT HE WAS CAMPAIGNING FOR THE NOMINATION BUT DID LEAVE THE DOOR OPEN SHOULD HE BE CALLED UPON TO BE THE CANDIDATE. IN THE SAME INTERVIEW STRAUSS COMMENTED THAT HE THOUGHT THE DECISION AS TO WHO THE UNION CANDIDATE WOULD BE, WOULD BE MADE BEFORE THE JUNE CDU NATIONAL CONVENTION. A CSU POLITICIAN TOLD US, HOWEVER, THAT THE ONLY WAY HE BELIEVED A DECISION COULD BE REACHED BEFORE THE END OF JUNE WOULD BE IF KOHL WERE CHOSEN AS A CANDIDATE. HE COULD NOT BELIEVE, HE SAID, THAT KOHL WOULD BE WILLING TO GO BEFORE A NATIONAL CDU CONVENTION AND ENDORSE FRANZ JOSEF STRAUSS AS THE CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE. EVEN IF STRAUSS, THIS CSU POLITICIAN SAID, DECIDED NOT TO SEEK THE NOMINATION, THE QUESTION OF FORMULATING UNION POLICY POSITIONS ACCEPTABLE TO THE CSU, BEFORE THE JUNE CONVENTION, WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT. OUR SOURCE FELT THAT IT WAS UNLIKELY THAT STRAUSS WOULD ACCEPT ASSURANCES FROM THE CDU THAT THE POLICY POSITIONS THAT EMERGED LATER WOULD, IN PRINCIPLE, CONFORM TO CSU WISHES. THE MAIN STICKING POINT, HE SAID, BETWEEN THE CDU AND THE CSU ON POLICY ISSUES WOULD BE IN THE AREA OF SOCIAL POLICY (I.E., THE FINANCING OF THE EVER MORE EXPENSIVE GERMAN SOCIAL WELFARE STATE).

7. ALTHOUGH THE SONTHOFEN SPEECH, AND TO A LESSER DEGREE THE BUNDESTAG DEBATE, HAVE HURT STRAUSS' CHANCES TO BECOME THE UNION CANDIDATE, THEY DO NOT PER SE RULE OUT A STRAUSS CANDIDACY. STRAUSS, FOR EXAMPLE, WILL TAKE A VERY ACTIVE ROLE IN THE NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIAN ELECTIONS AND IS LIKELY TO ATTRACT LARGE CROWDS. SHOULD THE CDU BE VICTORIOUS, STRAUSS WILL CLAIM A LARGE SHARE OF THE CREDIT. ANOTHER UNKNOWN FACTOR IS WHAT THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS WOULD BE OF A NEW OUTBREAK OF TERRORIST ACTIVITIES. ALL THIS SAID, STRAUSS WILL HAVE AN EXTREMELY DIFFICULT PATH TO CLIMB IF HE IS TO BECOME THE UNION CANDIDATE. THE SONTHOFEN SPEECH CONFIRMS THAT HE IS OFTEN HIS OWN WORST ENEMY.

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